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Report of the Board of Auditors on the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Board of Auditors on the handling of information and communications technology (ICT) affairs in the Secretariat (A/67/651). The Committee also had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Board's report (A/67/651/Add.1), as well as a separate memorandum prepared by the Board setting out its detailed findings and recommendations on information security. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that it is up to the Board to determine whether and how it wishes to disclose the details of this memorandum to the General Assembly.

2. During its consideration of the above-mentioned reports, the Advisory Committee met with the members of the Audit Operations Committee as well as with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided clarification and additional information in writing, concluding with written responses submitted on 28 February 2013.

3. The Advisory Committee recalls that in its resolution 66/246,[1] the General Assembly decided that the Office of Information and Communications Technology and its budget would be placed under the Department of Management and that the Chief Information Technology Officer would report to the head of the Department of

[1] In that resolution, the General Assembly also took action on the governance structure of the enterprise resource planning project and requested the Advisory Committee to request the Board of Auditors to conduct a comprehensive audit of the implementation of the project and to report annually to the General Assembly, starting at the main part of its sixty-seventh session (see A/67/164, A/67/360 and A/67/565).

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Management. The Assembly requested the Committee to request the Board of Auditors to audit and evaluate the handling of ICT affairs in the Secretariat, including the Office of Information and Communications Technology, and to report thereon to the Assembly at the main part of its sixty-seventh session. The Committee conveyed the Assembly's request to the Board in a letter dated 17 January 2012.

4. The report of the Board of Auditors contains its findings and recommendations resulting from an audit undertaken in October 2012 in response to the aforementioned request. The report reflects, where appropriate, the Administration's comments on the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Board (A/67/651, para. 13). The Secretary-General's response contained in the addendum to the report provides, in particular, an update on the implementation of the recommendations related to strengthening the security of information and systems across the Secretariat.

II. Background

5. Background information is provided in paragraphs 1 to 10 of the report of the Board. It is noted that the effective provision of ICT services is essential in supporting a wide range of critical administrative and operational activities, both at Headquarters and in the field, in the areas of peacekeeping, security, development, human rights, international affairs and humanitarian assistance. In its resolution 66/246, the General Assembly underlined the importance of information and communications technology in meeting the growing demands of the Organization as it becomes increasingly reliant on its ICT infrastructure. The Assembly also highlighted the importance of information and communications technology in strengthening oversight and accountability and in increasing the availability of accurate and timely information to support decision-making.

6. The Advisory Committee has frequently stressed the need for a coherent, coordinated and accountable approach to managing ICT activities, not only within the Secretariat but also across the United Nations system.[2] The Secretary-General has acknowledged that the lack of effective governance and leadership in this area has resulted in a high level of duplication and fragmentation of the ICT function of the Secretariat, with the creation of multiple ICT units in various departments and at various duty stations, the lack of common standards and processes, the piecemeal development of systems and the proliferation of duplicate and incompatible databases. Such fragmentation has led to the inefficient and ineffective use of resources, increasing the costs of ICT systems and infrastructure and making it difficult to identify overall expenditures and assets (see A/60/692 and A/60/846/Add.1).

7. The Advisory Committee recalls that, as early as the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, it highlighted the role of technology in realizing efficiency gains and increasing productivity in the delivery of programmes and services, and also called for a long-term coordinated ICT strategy and a plan for its implementation throughout the Secretariat, including all duty stations (A/50/7/Add.16, para. 37). The General Assembly first requested the Secretary-General to develop a comprehensive strategy for the development and implementation of information technology in its resolution 54/249. The initial proposals of the Secretary-General

[2] See A/54/7, paras. 80-92; A/55/7/Add.8; A/56/7, paras. 80-94; A/57/772, paras. 100-106; A/58/7, paras. 114-126; A/60/7, paras. 110-112; A/60/735 and Corr.1, paras. 15-18; and A/60/870, para. 16.

for an ICT strategy and a plan of action to guide the development of ICT at the United Nations, submitted at the fifty-fifth and fifty-seventh sessions, did not produce the desired results.[3] Subsequently, in the context of management reform initiatives launched in response to the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), the Assembly approved the Secretary-General's proposals to establish the post of Chief Information Technology Officer and to replace the Integrated Management Information System with a next-generation enterprise resource planning system (resolution 60/283).

8. In 2008 the General Assembly, in its resolution 63/262, adopted a new ICT strategy for the United Nations.[4] The three broad goals of the strategy were: (a) to align ICT with the mission and work programmes of the Secretariat; (b) to allow personnel and their stakeholders to connect and share knowledge anytime, anywhere; and (c) to deploy and utilize institutional resources efficiently (see A/62/793, para. 13).

9. That ICT strategy was based on strong central leadership for the establishment and implementation of Organization-wide ICT standards and activities and a decentralized approach to operations. Three broad areas of critical requirements were identified that needed to be addressed in a coherent manner across the Secretariat and delivered centrally: (a) resource management to aid administrative groups in managing financial, human, physical and other resources; (b) knowledge management to aid substantive and other departments in managing their unstructured information; and (c) infrastructure management to aid ICT specialists in providing secure and continuous operations, including data centres, communications, service desks and disaster recovery and business continuity capabilities.

10. Three Organization-wide programmes were established in the Office of Information and Communications Technology at the time of its creation, in January 2009, to deliver the approved ICT strategy over a three- to five-year period. For each programme, the strategy set out the goals, objectives and key actions to be undertaken to address gaps and organizational requirements, as well as the expected benefits. It was envisaged that a number of projects would be planned and implemented over the next five years under each of the three programmes. For example, the enterprise content management project was to be implemented under the knowledge management programme, and the resource management programme would cover the customer relationship management (iNeed) and enterprise resource planning systems. It was expected that as those enterprise-wide systems were implemented and a common set of standards, processes and tools were adopted, the level of fragmentation and duplication would decrease.

11. The strategy approved by the General Assembly in 2008 also established an ICT management structure and governance framework comprising: (a) a high-level executive committee on ICT to make decisions on investments and priorities; (b) advisory groups representing the client departments of ICT services to provide input on their requirements and priorities; (c) a Chief Information Technology Officer responsible for the overall direction and performance of ICT activities in the Organization; (d) a central, independent Office of Information and Communications

[3] See the reports of the Secretary-General on the ICT strategy: A/55/780 and A/57/620; related reports of the Advisory Committee: A/56/7 and A/58/7; and General Assembly resolutions 56/239 and 57/304.

[4] See also A/62/793 and Add.1 and A/63/487.

Technology,[5] headed by the Chief Information Technology Officer and reporting to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General through the Deputy Secretary-General, to provide central leadership in the area of ICT for the Organization, set Organization-wide standards and policies, plan and coordinate Secretariat-wide activities, provide enterprise systems and infrastructure and consolidate the "strategic" or central functions previously performed by ICT units across the Secretariat, as well as to deliver ICT services at Headquarters; and (e) decentralized ICT units in Secretariat departments and at offices away from Headquarters to provide departmental systems and services based on organizational standards established by the Office of Information and Communications Technology and to deal with local and operational issues. The structure of the Office of Information and Communications Technology was aligned with the ICT strategy and its three Organization-wide programmes.

12. In addition, the ICT strategy envisaged the development of: (a) a performance management framework to improve objective tracking of key measures of performance, staff skills and management of ICT resources in order to enhance service delivery; (b) a global service-oriented architecture and strong technical standards to ensure harmonization and interoperability in order to enable the consolidation of ICT assets, systems and services and drive down acquisition and maintenance costs; and (c) a global financial framework to enforce financial discipline and accountability for all spending on ICT and reduce costs through consolidation, centralized purchasing and improved efficiency, with a view to making more funds available for discretionary programmes.

13. The Secretary-General also submitted in a separate report (A/62/510/Rev.1) proposals for enterprise systems to be managed centrally for the entire Organization under the authority of the Chief Information Technology Officer, namely, enterprise content management, customer relationship management and enterprise resource planning, including, for each system, the proposed governance structure, implementation strategy, timetable and budget estimates. In its resolution 63/262, the General Assembly recognized the benefits of the implementation of the customer relationship management and enterprise content management systems and requested the Secretary-General to continue to implement those applications throughout the Organization, as appropriate, under the authority of the Chief Information Technology Officer in order to ensure a coordinated approach to the development of enterprise systems. The Assembly provided $2 million of the $22 million requested by the Secretary-General for the implementation of those projects, and asked him to meet the remaining requirements from within the overall resources appropriated under the programme budget. The Assembly also approved the implementation of the enterprise resource planning system and the proposed governance framework of the project, under which the project director would report to the Under-Secretary-General for

[5] Established under a separate budget section pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/262, through the redeployment of the entire staffing and resources (regular budget, support account and extrabudgetary) of the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services of the Department of Management; the transfer of the "strategic activities" of the Information and Communications Technology Division of the Department of Field Support with the redeployment of peacekeeping support account resources in the amount of $5,017,500 (comprising $4,255,500 for non-post resources and $760,000 to provide for the redeployment of 10 posts (3 P-4, 4 P-3, 2 P-2, 1 General Service (Other level)); and the redeployment of the post of the Chief Information Technology Officer from budget section 1.

Management in her capacity as the Chair of the Enterprise Resource Planning Steering Committee and to the Chief Information Technology Officer on day-to-day project management and technology issues. Subsequently, at the request of the Assembly, in its resolution 64/243, the Secretary-General submitted annual progress reports on the implementation of the enterprise resource planning project (Umoja).

14. Following the adoption of the ICT strategy in 2008, the General Assembly, in its resolution 63/262, requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive inventory of ICT capacities across the Secretariat, including both dedicated and part-time personnel. On the basis of a preliminary review in 2008 and a more comprehensive assessment of more than 70 ICT units conducted in 2010, the Secretary-General, in his progress report on the implementation of the ICT strategy (A/65/491), for the first time provided estimates of overall Secretariat expenditures, assets, resources and staffing for ICT, which are summarized in the table below. The key findings of the review were that the ICT environment and processes of the Organization remained highly decentralized, fragmented, duplicative and non-standardized, thereby driving up the costs of operations and preventing the Organization from realizing economies of scale. Furthermore, a large proportion of resources were directed towards infrastructure and routine operational tasks, and ICT support for programmatic, substantive, administrative and managerial activities was lacking. The review revealed that expenditures of the United Nations on ICT were high, rising to some $774 million, with a total staff count of more than 4,200, including personnel financed by regular budget, peacekeeping, support account and extrabudgetary sources, some 70 ICT units, 211 data centres and server rooms, 131 service desks and 1,994 application programmes.

Key ICT statistics based on the 2010 structural review

Key indicators	*Headquarters*	*Offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions, others*	*Peacekeeping and special political missions*	*Total*
Annual ICT budget (millions of United States dollars)	149	62	563	774
ICT personnel	770	688	2 761	4 219
ICT job titles	–	–	–	173
ICT units	21	15	34	70
Application programmes	841	825	328	1 994
Physical servers	888	1 322	2 347	4 557
Data centres/server rooms	8	89	114	211
Desktop computers and laptops	17 244	18 435	48 117	83 796
ICT service desks	20	27	84	131
Service desk requests (annual)	292 511	225 597	628 521	1 146 629

15. In his progress report (A/65/491), the Secretary-General also highlighted the difficulties encountered in determining consolidated budget and staffing figures. Because of the lack of consistent and comparable data across the Organization, the overall budget estimate was based on a time-consuming manual compilation of

information from a variety of documents, making it difficult to track the costs of ICT activities on a regular basis. Similar difficulties were encountered in determining the number of staff, owing in particular to the existence of multiple repositories based on the type of personnel (staff, contractors, consultants, volunteers) and the lack of standard ICT job titles. For example, the staff count did not include personnel who performed ICT functions but were not a part of a formal ICT unit or did not hold an ICT job title. The Secretary-General noted that the inability to easily monitor and report on the Secretariat-wide ICT budget and staffing significantly limited the effective global management of ICT. He highlighted the need for a consistent and streamlined global chart of accounts and a supporting financial system with the capability of tracking the costs of ICT activities on a regular basis, as well as standardized functional titles and job descriptions for ICT personnel.

16. On the basis of the findings of the review, the Secretary-General proposed four structural review projects aimed at streamlining and standardizing the ICT environment across the Secretariat: (a) globalize service desks to reduce their number, provide round-the-clock service and introduce automated and standardized service desk technologies and self-service tools for end users; (b) streamline and consolidate data centres, server rooms and servers, establishing a minimum number of enterprise and duty station data centres, and provide round-the-clock service; (c) rationalize the ICT organization, establishing the boundaries of ICT functions, implementing a global staffing model, reviewing ICT units and formulating recommendations for the implementation of organizational change in the ICT management structure, including the consolidation of multiple ICT units within the same department; and (d) strengthen the Office of Information and Communications Technology, augmenting its capacities in such strategic, high-priority areas as policy formulation, oversight and coordination, architecture and standard-setting, enterprise application development, global portfolio management and conduct of departmental ICT budget reviews. The overall resources proposed for the four projects over a five-year implementation period from 2011 to 2015 amounted to $140.7 million, proposed to be funded on the basis of a cost-sharing arrangement from regular budget, peacekeeping and extrabudgetary resources.

17. In its resolution 65/259, the General Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to proceed with structural review project 3 (rationalizing the ICT organization) and decided that the $1.5 million required for the project for 2011 would be provided from within the resources approved for the biennium 2010-2011. The Assembly decided to provide general temporary assistance equivalent to seven P-4 positions for structural review project 4 (strengthening the Office of Information and Communications Technology), of which five were to be funded from within existing resources for 2010-2011. The Assembly also decided not to approve any funding related to the other two projects and requested the Secretary-General to review the proposals on the implementation of the ICT strategy contained in his report (A/65/491) and submit new and/or revised proposals in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

18. In his subsequent report on enterprise ICT initiatives (A/66/94), the Secretary-General presented four revised cross-cutting, Organization-wide initiatives at a total cost of $42.8 million for the biennium 2012-2013, as follows: (a) improve enterprise ICT management, integrating earlier proposals for project 3 (rationalizing the ICT organization) and project 4 (strengthening the Office of Information and Communications Technology); (b) leverage knowledge through ICT, formerly referred

to as "enterprise content management" (resolution 64/243, para. 125); (c) enhance ICT service delivery, revising the Secretary-General's previous proposal for project 1 (globalizing service desks) and integrating ongoing implementation of the customer relationship management system (see A/65/491); (d) create a resilient ICT infrastructure, presenting a revised proposal for project 2 (streamlining data centres) (ibid.), consolidating the requirements for a unified disaster recovery and business continuity plan, including a permanent solution for Headquarters, in response to General Assembly resolutions 63/262, 63/269 and 65/259.

19. The General Assembly, in its resolution 66/246, requested the Secretary-General to implement initiative 1 (improve enterprise information and communications technology management) and initiative 4 (create a resilient information and communications technology infrastructure). It decided not to approve additional funding for the implementation of those initiatives and did not approve the remaining two initiatives. The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to submit any future funding proposals for major ICT projects for consideration by the Assembly only after the full implementation of Umoja. As indicated in paragraph 3 above, in the same resolution the Assembly also took action on the management arrangements of the Office of Information and Communications Technology.

III. Context

20. The United Nations is actively engaged in the implementation of or envisages launching a number of major business transformation and change management initiatives, including the enterprise resource planning system, the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), a revised service delivery model and the global field support strategy, as well as ongoing human resources management reforms. As highlighted by the Board, information and communications technologies are an integral part of these business transformation initiatives, which use technology to enable and deliver change. **The Advisory Committee continues to believe that the provision of appropriate ICT support as well as consistent, comprehensive and reliable corporate information to support decision-making is critical for the successful implementation of such initiatives.**

IV. General comments

21. The Board's assessment of the handling of ICT affairs across the Secretariat (see A/67/651) covers a broad range of elements, including the ICT strategy of the United Nations; the alignment of the strategy with the Organization's business model and business transformation needs; the ICT governance framework; the role of the Chief Information Technology Officer; the overall costs of the ICT function; the staffing profile of the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the skills base of people involved in ICT; and service management and technology, including the management of ICT applications and information security issues.

22. The Board identified three key limitations of the current ICT strategy, including: (a) insufficient emphasis on the enterprise resource planning system, which is the single largest ICT-enabled business transformation project of the United Nations; (b) insufficient prioritization of information security issues; and (c) insufficient

recognition of peacekeeping activities, which account for some 75 per cent of overall ICT expenditure (A/67/651, paras. 18 and 19).

23. The overall conclusion of the Board is that the Organization was unsuccessful in enforcing a more centralized ICT implementation and delivery strategy.

24. The Board attributes this to a variety of factors, including: (a) the failure to establish a common vision and commitment across the Organization; (b) the lack of senior management support to drive more centralized decision-making and corporate behaviour from the centre; (c) the fact that the governance structures did not function effectively; (d) the fact that the role and authority of the Office of Information and Communications Technology and its Chief were not clearly defined, communicated or understood within the Secretariat; and (e) the inherent difficulty in achieving business transformation solely through the work of a central ICT function that lacks the authority to enforce change in an organization such as the United Nations, which operates more as a network of organizations rather than as a single, global and homogenous entity.

25. More broadly, the Board notes that the difficulties in implementing the ICT strategy mirrored those experienced by the United Nations in delivering major business transformation projects such as Umoja. These include the absence of an overall coherent view, framework or planned agenda for business transformation; the lack of clear and effective governance and accountability arrangements for such major programmes; and weaknesses in control owing to the absence of regular financial management information to inform decision-making.

26. The Board issued a series of recommendations for addressing the weaknesses identified in the aforementioned areas (see para. 21 above), which have all been accepted by the Secretariat. The Board notes both the Administration's open acknowledgement of the issues raised in the report and its commitment to act upon them decisively to improve the current ICT situation in the Secretariat, including the development of a new ICT strategy that is consistent with both United Nations objectives and realistic ambitions for transformation. The Committee notes that the Secretariat proposes to submit a new ICT strategy for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, in 2013 (A/67/651, summary).

27. Details on the Board's recommendations and the actions envisaged by the Secretariat for their implementation are reflected in the report of the Board, in particular as regards the following:

(a) The update and reformulation of the ICT strategy (ibid., paras. 21 and 22);

(b) The comprehensive tracking of ICT expenditures and the funding of ICT activities (ibid., paras. 29-33);

(c) The United Nations operating and service delivery models (ibid., paras. 39-43);

(d) Clarification of the respective roles of chief information officer and chief technology officer, as well as of the Office of Information and Communications Technology (ibid., paras. 44-56);

(e) The ICT governance framework (ibid., paras. 60-70);

(f) The staffing of the Office of Information and Communications Technology and upgrading the skills of United Nations ICT personnel (ibid., paras. 71-78);

(g) ICT service management (ibid., paras. 79-85);

(h) Software applications management strategy (ibid., paras. 86-92);

(i) Information security (ibid., paras. 93-101).

28. **The Advisory Committee commends the Board for the continued high quality of its work and is satisfied by the scope and depth of its audit. It welcomes the relevant and constructive recommendations issued by the Board for addressing the serious weaknesses identified in its audit. The Committee appreciates in particular the Board's insights into the root causes and systemic weaknesses hindering progress in the implementation of major business transformation projects and management reform initiatives at the United Nations.** It notes, for instance, the Board's observations on the complex and decentralized nature of the United Nations and the need to gain a better understanding of Organization-wide activities that require strong central control and those which merit greater operational freedom. The Board's audit also provides some clarification as to the interdependencies between ICT reform and other ongoing business transformation projects. **In the view of the Committee, the independent assessment of the Board constitutes a valuable tool for the Secretariat in analysing lessons learned and charting a course of action for the future development of ICT at the United Nations. It will also facilitate the consideration by the General Assembly of progress in the implementation of major business transformation initiatives such as Umoja, as well as decision-making on ICT investments. The Committee considers that, in the future, the Board should be requested to conduct such assessments earlier in the implementation cycle of major projects and initiatives so as to ensure that issues are detected and reported to the Assembly in a more timely fashion and that remedial action can be taken promptly.**

29. **The Advisory Committee is disappointed by the failure to successfully implement the United Nations ICT strategy approved by the General Assembly more than four years after its adoption, in 2008. The Committee is of the view that the lack of senior management commitment, ownership and accountability were key factors in this regard. The Board's audit report demonstrates the Secretariat's weaknesses in delivering major business transformation projects and management reform initiatives. The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to lead a serious effort to fully analyse the lessons learned from the problems encountered in the implementation of the ICT strategy and major business transformation initiatives audited by the Board, such as Umoja, IPSAS and the global field support strategy. The Committee stresses that senior managers and other relevant staff should be fully engaged in this process in an accountable manner and commit to bringing about the changes that are necessary if the United Nations is to evolve into a modern, efficient and well-run organization. In this connection, the Committee notes the inclusion in the senior managers' compacts with the Secretary-General of ICT- and Umoja-related objectives, indicators of achievement and performance measures, starting in 2010. It considers that, if properly applied, the compacts could constitute an effective instrument of accountability for performance and compliance with organizational decisions and standards.**

30. **In view of the setbacks experienced in successfully implementing major business transformation projects and management reform initiatives, as well as the limited capacity of the Organization to absorb such change, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to develop a pragmatic, realistic and practical course of action for implementing the recommendations issued by the Board. The Committee is of the view that the implementation of the recommendations of the Board will involve a combination of: (a) long-term planning to bring about the cultural, organizational and structural changes that are needed to address root causes and systemic issues at the organizational level; (b) medium- and short-term restructuring to improve the handling of ICT at the United Nations and to better support the ongoing implementation of business transformation initiatives; and (c) immediate actions required to address urgent issues, including on information security matters. The Committee considers that the Secretariat should prioritize its efforts and, to the extent possible, adopt a sequential approach to the implementation of the ICT strategy, which would clearly set out the actions to be taken immediately and in the short-, medium- and long-term time frames.**

31. **In this regard, the Advisory Committee believes that the highest priority should be given to identifying and putting into place the measures that are required to ensure the successful implementation of all of the phases of Umoja and ensuring that the Office of Information and Communications Technology and other relevant departments, offices and units are able to support the enterprise resource planning system autonomously in the post-implementation phase. Such measures include, for example, the implementation of an application management strategy to deal with the decommissioning of some 700 applications, centralized standards for desktop computers interfacing with the enterprise resource planning system, the consolidation of help desks for servicing Umoja users and the establishment of enterprise data centres for hosting the enterprise resource planning software. The Committee stresses the critical importance and priority of ensuring a successful outcome of the Umoja implementation project, not only to protect the significant investment already made by Member States, but also because Umoja is essential for improving overall effectiveness and efficiency in the operations of the Organization. The enterprise resource planning system is also a requirement, inter alia, for completing and sustaining the transition to IPSAS, harmonizing and standardizing business practices across the Organization, enhancing management information to support better decision-making and enabling business transformation and management reform initiatives, such as improved accountability and a more efficient service delivery model.**

32. **The Advisory Committee also recommends that the Secretary-General be requested, when developing his proposals for the implementation of the ICT strategy or Umoja, to consider all options for the prioritization and redeployment of resources and to avoid to the extent possible submitting requests for additional resources. Given that Umoja will become an Organization-wide resource that will benefit every department and office of the Secretariat, the Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to make every effort to secure resources from within existing resources in all departments and offices. In this connection, the Committee recalls paragraph 106 of General Assembly resolution 66/246, in which the**

Secretary-General was requested to submit any future funding proposals for major ICT projects only after the full implementation of Umoja. Any proposals for additional resources for the implementation of the ICT strategy should be accompanied by a cost-benefit analysis. The Committee further recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to reflect the prioritization of Umoja-related activities in the proposed programme budget for 2014-2015.

33. The Advisory Committee has been informed that the Chief Information Technology Officer position has been vacant since July 2012 and is under recruitment. **The Committee considers that the functions of the Chief Information Technology Officer are crucial in ensuring the effective direction, planning and management of ICT activities, particularly at a time when major changes are occurring and important decisions on the direction of the ICT function have to be taken. It therefore recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to fill the position without further delay.**

34. Despite the serious issues highlighted in the report, the Board recognizes that the Administration has demonstrated important achievements at an operational level and it notes the consistently positive feedback given by business users regarding the Office of Information and Communications Technology and ICT staff in other offices in the discharge of their operational functions and their commitment to quality service.

35. **The Advisory Committee stresses the need to protect the investments made thus far in the implementation of the ICT strategy in such areas as the customer relationship management system, enterprise content management, portfolio management and enterprise identity management. The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested, when reformulating the ICT strategy, to explore how the implementation of these systems will be integrated into the strategy.**

36. In the paragraphs that follow, the Advisory Committee comments on some of the specific issues raised in the Board's report.

V. Observations and comments on specific aspects of the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat

A. United Nations operating and service delivery models

37. The Board of Auditors recommends that the Administration should recognize the changes that need to be made in responsibilities and the operating model of the Secretariat in order to deliver any new ICT strategy, and accept that senior management as a whole is responsible for the delivery of Organization-wide changes to support the Chief Information Technology Officer (A/67/651, summary). The Secretariat indicates that a plan to review the current operating model and identify opportunities to realize further benefits through changes to the service delivery model is under way. Under the plan, process owners will have the ultimate responsibility for identifying and implementing opportunities to improve the service delivery model across the Secretariat. A report on global service delivery models is to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session (ibid., paras. 42 and 43).

38. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its first annual progress report on the implementation of the enterprise resource planning system, the Board of Auditors indicated that the redesign of the service delivery model should have been one of the project's priorities and that a Secretariat-wide approach to common service delivery could facilitate the transition to the new enterprise resource planning system and also generate considerable efficiencies in the long term (see A/67/164).

39. **The Advisory Committee recommends that, in developing his report on global service delivery models, the Secretary-General be requested to bear in mind the opportunities offered by the enterprise resource planning system for increasing productivity and cost-effectiveness in service delivery. Attention should also be paid to ensuring that the proposed models are compatible with the design of the Umoja solution, and that their adoption would not result in cost escalation or further delays in the implementation of Umoja. The Committee reiterates that any changes to the current service delivery model must be approved by the General Assembly.**

B. Information and communications technology strategy

40. As noted above, the Board has identified three key limitations in the current ICT strategy. It also states that the ICT strategy was delivered only partially and did not achieve its three main goals because it did not provide a clear direction or describe how ICT changes were essential to business needs or to the core objectives of the United Nations or reflect the importance of the strategy for the implementation of Umoja. Nor was it aligned with United Nations culture and practice, funded appropriately or communicated effectively. It recommends that the Administration develop a new ICT strategy that is consistent with United Nations objectives and presents realistic ambitions for transformation (see paras. 22-27 above).

41. The Advisory Committee considers that the formulation of a new ICT strategy that addresses the multiple, complex issues raised in the Board's report represents a major endeavour, which requires the leadership and input of the Chief Information Technology Officer. It emphasizes that the strategy should take into account all the recommendations of the Board, as well as the comments contained in the present report. In the paragraphs below, the Committee comments on some of the key issues to be considered in formulating a revised ICT strategy.

42. The Advisory Committee agrees with the Board that the ICT strategy should be consistent with United Nations objectives and present realistic ambitions for transformation. **The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to ensure that any proposals he submits for an updated or a revised ICT strategy are closely aligned with the real needs of the Organization, in particular those arising from ongoing or upcoming business transformation initiatives, including Umoja, IPSAS and the global field support strategy.**

Centralization/decentralization

43. The Board states that both the ICT strategy and Umoja were designed to enable a new, globally consistent operating model, but that the autonomous nature of Secretariat entities and the existing business model were not sufficiently taken into account in preparing for such a centralized ICT-enabled transformation

(A/67/651, summary). It stresses that the revised ICT strategy should be more realistic and take into account the highly decentralized nature of the Organization.

44. The Advisory Committee notes that a tension between centralization and decentralization exists in all operating models. The Organization needs to come to an agreement on how to adapt its current operating model to new requirements, and also achieve an appropriate balance between those ICT activities that should be centralized and those that should remain delegated to the local and regional levels. As indicated by the Board, this will involve identifying precisely the activities that require tighter control and should be managed centrally and those that can be delegated to local ICT units (see A/67/651, para. 58). Figure III of the report of the Board, provides an illustration of how this concept might work in the context of the United Nations, using enterprise resource planning and information security as examples of Organization-wide initiatives requiring tight central control. In this connection, the Committee was informed by the Secretariat that a revised governance structure was being envisaged, under which some decisions would be taken centrally with the aim of achieving greater harmonization, while others would be delegated to the local level. The revised arrangements would require promulgation of a Secretary-General's bulletin to define the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Information and Communications Technology in this regard. The Committee underscores the importance of the role of the Management Committee in facilitating such an agreement and the requirement for senior managers to commit to applying any Organization-wide decisions (see para. 29 above).

45. The Advisory Committee stresses that, regardless of the approach adopted, there is a need to address comprehensively the question of the excessive fragmentation of ICT capacities across the Secretariat revealed through the structural review. That fragmentation results in the inefficient use of resources and ineffective ICT service delivery (see para. 14 above). The Advisory Committee has frequently stressed that the Organization would benefit greatly from more effective leadership in the area of ICT at the United Nations and a more centralized approach to managing ICT initiatives and operations Organization-wide. Existing arrangements regarding ICT activities do not provide a coherent strategy and make it difficult to identify all ICT assets, develop and enforce standard methodologies and implement Organization-wide systems. This has led to the proliferation of incompatible and duplicative ICT systems (see para. 6 above).

46. Another major limitation highlighted by the Board, which needs to be addressed when formulating a new ICT strategy, is the question of the inclusion of peacekeeping ICT capacities, which represent 75 per cent of ICT resources (see para. 22 above). During the Advisory Committee's exchange of views with the Audit Operations Committee, it acknowledged that the size of the Information and Communications Technology Division of the Department of Field Support relative to that of the Office of Information and Communications Technology did indeed pose some challenges. The Audit Operations Committee was of the view that the United Nations needed to consider whether the Information and Communications Technology Division should operate as a separate business unit or whether it should follow the strategic lead of the Office of Information and Communications Technology. A small strategic centre could command authority over a larger operational unit, if, among other things, the United Nations had a clear understanding of its operating model, clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities, and appropriate management capability and commitment. The

Audit Operations Committee further indicated that, regardless of the arrangement, it was of the view that any ICT strategy for the United Nations that did not encompass peacekeeping operations would lack credibility. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to thoroughly explore this question in the context of the formulation of a new ICT strategy.**

Alignment of the information and communications technology strategy with major business transformation projects and prioritization of Umoja

47. The Board is of the view that any major ICT-enabled business change should be a significant element of an ICT strategy. It considers that one of the key limitations of the United Nations ICT strategy was that it did not reflect the importance of ICT reform for the implementation of Umoja or establish a clear and shared vision of how ICT innovation could support business needs and the achievement of United Nations core objectives. The Board recommends that the Administration develop a new ICT strategy, including a United Nations-wide information strategy and an enterprise architecture framework that describes how information and technology will support and provide benefits for the Organization. In its response, the Secretariat accepted the need to update and reformulate its ICT strategy and to align the new strategy with the implementation of Umoja and with a broader business support strategy that defines the service delivery model of the Organization (ibid., paras. 20 and 21).

48. The Advisory Committee shares the Board's concerns in this regard. In its reports on the implementation of Umoja (see A/63/487, A/64/7/Add.9, A/65/576, A/66/7/Add.1 and A/67/565), it has consistently stressed the need for increased collaboration between the Office of Information Communications Technology, the enterprise resource planning project team and the Information and Communications Technology Division of the Department of Field Support in areas such as: (a) the establishment of the technical infrastructure of the enterprise resource planning system; (b) the alignment of technical standards of the enterprise resource planning project with those of the Office of Information and Communications Technology; (c) the development of interfaces between legacy systems and the enterprise resource planning system; (d) the cleansing, conversion and migration of data; (e) the establishment of a comprehensive inventory and classification of existing systems, in particular those that are to be interfaced to or replaced by Umoja; and (f) the establishment of plans for the timely decommissioning of existing systems to be replaced by Umoja. The Committee has also emphasized the need to involve the personnel responsible for the development/maintenance of existing systems, who possess critical information about data sources and structures, interfaces and supporting infrastructure, as well as to avoid any duplication of effort.

49. **The Advisory Committee is not convinced that, at this stage, sufficient collaboration exists among the enterprise resource planning project team, the Office of Information and Communications Technology and other ICT units.**

50. The Advisory Committee notes that the implementation of Umoja will necessarily entail some standardization and consolidation of ICT capacities, in particular with respect to software applications, data centres, help desks, servers and personal computers. For instance, the Secretary-General expects that some 700 of the approximately 1,994 existing software applications will be replaced by Umoja and eventually decommissioned (see paras. 52-55 below). Given that the enterprise

resource planning software is to be hosted centrally at the enterprise data centres, it is also likely that some of the 211 existing data centres/server rooms will become redundant and that the help desks servicing the applications to be decommissioned will be closed. Furthermore, server and desktop standards will need to be aligned to the requirements of the enterprise resource planning system (see paras. 56 and 57 below). The Committee recalls that, in his first progress report on the implementation of Umoja, the Secretary-General indicated that the implementation of Umoja would result in productivity and efficiency gains that would have an impact on staffing requirements and require alignment of skills to the new technologies and methods of work (see A/64/380). **The Committee stresses the need, given the scale and scope of the implementation of Umoja at the United Nations, to plan for the orderly consolidation of any ICT capacities that may occur as a result of the implementation of the system. The Committee also believes that the Umoja project team should focus its efforts on the implementation of the project and business transformation requirements, and that the Office of Information and Communications Technology, the Information and Communications Technology Division and other relevant units should provide the necessary support to address the above-mentioned issues.**

51. **The Advisory Committee considers that the implementation of Umoja provides a unique opportunity to test and implement some key aspects of the ICT strategy in a pilot environment. The lessons learned during the pilot could provide valuable insights and facilitate development of an ICT strategy that is well adapted to addressing the complexity, requirements and organizational specificities of the United Nations. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to carry out in-depth analyses of the ICT activities required to support the deployment of Umoja and to establish a plan for implementation of those activities under the leadership of the Chief Information Technology Officer and the Office of Information and Communications Technology. The Secretary-General should also analyse the interdependencies of the ICT strategy, Umoja and any approved operating models/service delivery models. The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to report on the outcome of the above studies in his report on the ICT strategy.**

C. Application management strategy

52. The Board recommends that the Administration develop an application management strategy to minimize security risks and reduce costs while also addressing enterprise-wide applications and any necessary data migration (A/67/651, para. 92). It notes that the Administration has no overall software application strategy and that there is no central control, funding or planning for United Nations software applications. The Board notes that the Office of Information and Communications Technology is responsible for managing eight applications with a wide reach, known as enterprise applications, and some 30 other applications based on Lotus Notes. The Board further notes that, of the 1,994 applications in use in the Secretariat, most have been developed locally and perform duplicate functions, despite the Administration's efforts to control ICT expenditure above certain limits and the introduction of a review and approval process for new ICT products (ibid., paras. 86 and 88).

53. The Board indicates that the lack of an overall strategy for applications has resulted in uncertainty regarding investments and priorities for ICT. It also exposes the Organization to security risks and increases the risk of duplicate expenditures and of exploitation by software vendors (ibid., para. 89). With regard to the 600 to 700 software applications expected to be decommissioned following the implementation of Umoja, in its first annual progress report on the implementation of the United Nations enterprise resource planning system (A/67/164), the Board noted that there was a lack of planning with regard to how the Organization will migrate from legacy systems, decommission them or use them to support the transition to Umoja. In its current report, the Board notes that even after the implementation of Umoja, more than 1,300 software applications will still be in use across the Secretariat, which makes integration and information-sharing difficult. The Board indicates that some applications could be adapted for enterprise-wide use, while many others could be consolidated (ibid., paras. 90 and 91). **The Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to deal with this issue as a matter of priority.**

54. The Advisory Committee shares the Board's concerns with regard to the lack of an application management strategy, as well as to the lack of planning for the migration from legacy systems and decommissioning of systems related to the implementation of Umoja. As indicated above, in the context of its consideration of the Secretary-General's annual progress reports on the implementation of Umoja, the Committee has repeatedly stressed the need to establish, as a first step in planning the decommissioning of systems, a comprehensive inventory of all the systems providing core functions for the management of human, financial and physical resources, which would also provide information on: (a) the systems to be replaced by Umoja, which could be decommissioned; (b) the systems to be maintained, which would be interfaced to Umoja; and (c) the systems to be maintained, for which no interface was required (see A/65/576). It has also emphasized the need to classify the systems in terms of their importance, taking into account elements such as functionality, resource requirements, scale and scope. **The Committee is of the view that not much progress has been made to date in this regard.**

55. **The Advisory Committee considers that there is an urgent need to develop and implement an Organization-wide application management policy, applicable to all departments and offices at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and field duty stations, in order to deal with the consolidation of the 1,300 application programmes that will remain after the implementation of Umoja (see para. 53 above) and halt the piecemeal development/acquisition of software applications and the continued proliferation of stand-alone, duplicate systems.** The Committee recalls that it was precisely the proliferation of stand-alone, incompatible and duplicative systems that led to its call for a coherent strategy for the development of information technology at the United Nations (see para. 6 above). **The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to conduct a comprehensive review of the 1,994 existing software applications and make proposals for reducing the number of applications and eliminating duplications, as well as for addressing the question of the decommissioning of applications discussed in the paragraphs above. It further recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to present the outcome of the review to the General Assembly in the context of his report on**

the ICT strategy, with options for improved and sustainable management of ICT at the United Nations. The Committee intends to follow up on this matter.

D. Information and communications technology equipment

56. The Board notes that individual departments are responsible for buying desktops with funds from their own budgets and that there is no corporate oversight of expenditure for such items. In addition, owing to local priorities, departments often choose to delay upgrading their systems and redirect ICT funds for other purposes, resulting in a fragmented, inconsistent desktop environment that limits the roll-out of Secretariat-wide applications (see A/67/651, para. 87). The Advisory Committee was informed that the introduction of the Umoja enterprise resource planning software would require a standardized desktop environment throughout the Secretariat.

57. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to ensure more effective and efficient use of ICT equipment, as well as transparent reporting on holdings of ICT equipment and assets, including personal computers, printers, telephones and servers.**

E. Information and communications technology costs

58. The Board indicates that there is limited visibility of ICT expenditure throughout the Secretariat because the United Nations chart of accounts and supporting financial system do not enable the costs of ICT activities to be routinely tracked. The Board states that it can provide no assurance on the figure of $774 million estimated in the 2010 review conducted by the Office of Information and Communications Technology (see para. 14 above), which does not capture actual expenditure and covers only proposed budgets because approved budgets do not contain sufficient detail to isolate relevant ICT components. In addition, each department and office has its own ICT budget and consolidated management information on ICT budgets and expenditures is not routinely prepared, which prevents the assessment, monitoring and prioritization of ICT funding across the United Nations (see A/67/651, summary and paras. 26 and 27). As indicated above, the Secretariat has acknowledged that it is unable to ensure that its investment in ICT is being used effectively and efficiently.

59. The Board has recommended that the Administration clearly specify how the chart of accounts in Umoja will enable ICT expenditure to be captured and monitored effectively and that it consider whether any options for improving management information on ICT expenditure could be pursued prior to the implementation of Umoja. In its response, the Secretariat indicates that the new chart of accounts that will be put in place with the implementation of Umoja will allow the Administration to clearly programme and record ICT resources and expenditures. Furthermore, in order to enable greater consistency and transparency with regard to ICT funding and budgets and allow better management of costs and effective prioritization, the Controller has required that proposed ICT budgets set out (a) the cost of running day-to-day services; (b) the cost of licences and maintenance costs for existing systems; (c) costs related to upgrading existing service delivery (e.g. to improve security); and (d) new costs, including strategic

requirements. The Secretariat also intends to strengthen the role of the Office of Information and Communications Technology to monitor ICT resources in the Organization by enforcing the reporting responsibilities of senior managers on ICT resources and projects, as reflected in their compacts with the Secretary-General (ibid., paras. 30, 31 and 33).

60. **The Advisory Committee welcomes the actions proposed by the Secretary-General in response to the recommendations of the Board and recommends that he be requested to ensure that the required data is captured and that consolidated information on overall ICT budgets and expenditures is provided to Member States, and furthermore, that every effort is made to utilize ICT resources more efficiently and effectively.** The Committee has, on several occasions, called for increased transparency in the presentation of the ICT costs and utilization of resources. In its first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, the Committee recommended that, in the future, the Secretary-General should be requested to routinely provide in the introduction to the proposed programme budget a consolidated picture of the totality of the resources proposed for ICT, with a breakdown of the resources by budget section, distinguishing between different sources of funding (regular budget, peacekeeping and extrabudgetary resources). The Committee further recommended that future budget submissions include, regardless of the source of funding, a clear ICT plan for each budget section containing proposals for the implementation of ICT projects, together with information on the expected results and benefits (A/66/7, paras. 116 and 117).

F. Role and functions of the Chief Information Technology Officer

61. The Board considers that the scope and remit of the Chief Information Technology Officer with regard to a strategic vision, business transformation and leadership was not clearly defined, communicated or understood within the Secretariat, nor was it clearly differentiated from the function of managing day-to-day ICT operations. It indicates that the designation of the Secretariat's most senior information officer as Chief Information Technology Officer (rather than as chief information officer) contributed to the expectation that the post would have a technical focus and encouraged behaviours that were consistent with an operational view of ICT. As a result, the Chief Information Technology Officer and management directed insufficient attention to: (a) transformation, change or strategic leadership of the ICT function, and (b) the development and enforcement of Secretariat-wide corporate guidance, frameworks, standards and policies (A/67/651, summary). The Board discusses the respective functions of chief information officer and chief technology officer in paragraphs 44 to 51 of its report.

62. The Board recommends that the Administration emphasize the strategic priorities of the Chief Information Technology Officer by redefining the functions of the post and amending the title, evaluate whether there is a need to appoint a chief technology officer or designate an existing post with the specific function of assisting the chief information officer in operational matters, and clearly define and communicate the different roles of those two officers across the Secretariat, in particular the scope and remit of the chief information officer with regard to strategy and business transformation (ibid., para. 50). **The Advisory Committee concurs with the Board on the need to distinguish between the responsibilities related to the achievement of strategic priorities and those for technology and operational**

issues, which are currently vested in the Chief Information Technology Officer position. It considers that it is up to the Secretary-General to evaluate whether there is a need to appoint a chief technology officer or designate an existing post to assist the chief information officer in operational matters. The Advisory Committee expects the Secretary-General to fully explain and justify any future proposal he may make with regard to the management arrangements for the Office of Information and Communications Technology.

G. Performance management

63. The Board indicates that the Office of Information and Communications Technology operates the service desk for Headquarters and maintains basic information on the performance of this service, including, for instance, the number of service requests received, fulfilled and cancelled. It further notes that business users consistently gave positive feedback on the Office of Information and Communications Technology (see A/67/651, para. 83 and para. 34 above). **The Advisory Committee welcomes this positive indicator of user satisfaction with the performance of the Office of Information and Communications Technology.** It considers nevertheless that, in addition to the help desk statistics, there is a need for more comprehensive performance information on the whole range of services provided by the Office, including information on performance targets and benchmarks against which progress could be measured, baseline information on activity levels, costs and quality of services, as well as assessment of the progress made towards the achievement of objectives. **The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to include, in any reformulated ICT strategy, a comprehensive performance management framework based on well-defined concepts and effective mechanisms and tools for monitoring, evaluating and measuring the results and impact of the activities implemented.**

H. Information and communications technology security

64. The Board is very concerned that the United Nations does not have an adequately secure information environment, noting that there is no overall approved information security policy, nor is there harmonization of the security environments across the Secretariat. The Advisory Committee notes with concern the delays experienced in adopting a Secretariat-wide information security charter and related policies, as well as the Board's statement that, even should the security charter be issued by the Office of Information and Communications Technology, it is unclear what status the document would have or how compliance would be monitored or enforced. The Board also indicates that, while there is a security manager in the Office of Information and Communications Technology, there is no authoritative mechanism or mandate to improve security across the Secretariat. Furthermore, in the absence of an overall information security policy, some departments, including the Department of Field Support, have developed their own policies and security approaches (ibid., paras. 95, 98 and 99).

65. As indicated in the report of the Board, its detailed findings and recommendations in relation to ICT security are set out in a separate memorandum addressed to the Chair of the Advisory Committee (see para. 1 above). In addition to the comments included in the Board's report, the Secretariat has submitted an

addendum to the Board's report (A/67/651/Add.1), which provides an additional update on the actions that are being taken by the Administration to strengthen, as a matter of urgency, information and system security across the Secretariat.

66. In the addendum, the Secretary-General indicates that an action plan is being developed. The plan foresees the implementation of short-term measures to address the most urgent shortcomings, as well as the definition of a sustainable medium- and long-term strategy for information security. The Advisory Committee notes that the action plan comprises a series of actions regarding preventive controls; improved incident detection and response capabilities; and governance, risk and compliance. The Secretary-General states that implementation of the action plan has commenced: the first stage is expected to be completed in 2013 and full implementation will continue in 2014. With regard to the actions to be taken in the area of governance, risk and compliance, the Secretary-General indicates that an information security charter and associated policy documents will be presented to the Management Committee for adoption and promulgation, and the policies established therein will be enforced throughout the Secretariat.

67. Upon enquiry as to the resource implications of the action plan, the Advisory Committee was informed that some of the measures envisaged would require new investments for hardware, software and/or services at the time of the initial implementation, while others would also require additional resources for ongoing operations. However, the additional measures envisaged to be implemented in the immediate future were limited to the ICT environment at Headquarters, and any related resource requirements would be covered by reprioritizing existing resources within the Office of Information and Communications Technology. The Secretary-General further indicated that he intended to include, in his upcoming report on the new ICT strategy, detailed resource requirements for a sustained Secretariat-wide implementation of his action plan beyond 2013. **The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested, when developing his proposals for the implementation of the information security action plan, to make every effort to prioritize and redeploy resources and to avoid, to the extent possible, submitting requests for additional resources (see para. 32 above).**

68. **The Advisory Committee shares the Board's concerns with regard to the information security situation. It recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to proceed with the implementation of his action plan as a matter of priority, and ensure adoption, without further delay, of the information security charter and associated policy documents in a manner that assures accountability at all levels of the Organization. The Secretary-General should also take prompt remedial action to address any hindrances that may arise to the effective implementation of the action plan or the promulgation and enforcement of information security policies throughout the Secretariat.**

69. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to provide, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, an update on the status of implementation of the actions taken to address information security issues. The Committee further requests the Board of Auditors to follow up on the implementation of its recommendations in this regard.**

VI. Conclusion

70. **In the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee has expressed it views and made a number of recommendations with regard to the development of proposals for a new ICT strategy for the United Nations. The Committee has highlighted the need to absorb all the lessons learned from recent experience and to adopt a pragmatic, practical and realistic approach to addressing the unique requirements of the United Nations and designing solutions that are well suited to its complex and decentralized organizational structures. Taking into account the large number of major business transformation/management reform initiatives currently under way, the Committee has also emphasized the need to prioritize efforts, and, if necessary, to adopt a sequential approach to the implementation of the ICT strategy should it not be feasible to implement all aspects of the strategy simultaneously.**

71. **The Advisory Committee strongly believes that it is in the best interest of the Organization to concentrate efforts and available resources, to the extent possible, towards the implementation of Umoja in order to ensure a successful outcome of this important project. The Committee has suggested an alternative approach, in phases, to the formulation of a new ICT strategy, under which, in the first phase, the ICT strategy would be reformulated to incorporate the aspects necessary to support the implementation of Umoja and to develop, in a subsequent phase, the full range of components of an ICT strategy for the United Nations. The Committee believes that such an approach would allow the Organization to address the urgent requirements of Umoja and also provide an opportunity to test and implement some key aspects of the ICT strategy in a pilot environment. It would also allow the United Nations to absorb more gradually the significant cultural and organizational changes that will undoubtedly result from the implementation of a comprehensive ICT strategy and the modernization and consolidation of ICT capacities across the Secretariat.**

72. **The Advisory Committee recognizes, however, that it is the prerogative of the Secretary-General to propose a suitable approach for the formulation of a new ICT strategy. It is of the view that any proposal submitted for consideration by the General Assembly should be based on a thorough analysis of the requirements of the United Nations, including the departments and offices at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and field duty stations. Any new strategy should include a detailed, workable implementation plan and a fully justified cost-benefit analysis. The proposal should also include details on ICT governance and management arrangements, including information on lines of responsibility and accountability, as well as on the senior responsible owner. The Committee considers it essential to designate a single individual, recognized as the senior responsible owner who will assume full accountability for the development and implementation of the ICT strategy. The Committee considers it equally important that the senior responsible owner be granted the requisite authority to implement and enforce the ICT strategy as approved by the General Assembly.**

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The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Identical letters dated 28 February 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, I wish to draw your attention to the following information:

Recent reports from various sources concur that the Israeli occupation authorities intend to move forward with an oil drilling project in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Israeli Ministry of Energy has authorized the American company Genie Energy to drill for oil in the area. The Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* stated in its issue of 21 February 2013 that the Israeli Minister of Energy, Uzi Landau, had agreed to an application from the Chief Executive Officer of Genie Energy to begin drilling.

The Syrian Arab Republic considers that, in taking such an illegal action, the occupying Power is in flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981). It seeks to consolidate its occupation and annexation, whereas the Security Council determined that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without international legal effect, and demanded that Israel should rescind forthwith its decision. Israel's action contravenes all of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and other international organizations, and, in particular, the General Assembly resolution entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources."

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The Syrian Arab Republic deplores Israel's dangerous attempts to exploit the current circumstances in the region to consolidate its occupation of Syrian territory and plunder its resources. Israel is blatantly violating the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources. The inalienable rights of peoples under occupation include sovereignty over their land, water and energy resources, which must not be exploited, depleted or wasted.

The Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes that, by ignoring Israel's illegal practices and its continuing violations of Security Council resolutions, the international community has encouraged Israel yet again to challenge the credibility of the United Nations and its binding resolutions.

The United Nations is now required to put an end to Israel's ongoing contempt for its resolutions and laws. The Organization must reject the double standards that grant Israel political immunity for its violations, allowing it to act as though it were exempt from its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law in respect of the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan.

The Syrian Arab Republic therefore demands that the Security Council and General Assembly fulfil their functions by ensuring that Israel, the occupying Power, complies with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and under international law, which prevents occupying States from undertaking any activities that could harm the integrity and natural, demographic and environmental characteristics of occupied territory.

Syria further notes that the company in question belongs to a State that is a permanent member of the Security Council. That State therefore has a dual responsibility to ensure that its companies comply with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Syria demands that the Council should go beyond mere formal condemnation of Israel's violation of Syrian territorial integrity, and establish a mechanism compelling Israel to respect and implement Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and all other international resolutions concerning the occupied Syrian Golan.

Lastly, the Syrian Arab Republic stresses that, by taking genuine action to prevent Israel from carrying out this latest act of aggression and provocation, the United Nations would uphold the credibility of its efforts to implement its resolutions on ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region in accordance with the peace process, whose parameters have been endorsed by the international community but relentlessly undermined by Israel.

I should be grateful if this letter could be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36, 53 and 61, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative